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ABSTRACT

This paper argues for the participation and partnership of diverse elements in the community in order to achieve the goals of educational reform, and especially to encourage academic achievement among minority students. In a speech before the Forum '88 conference of the National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering, the cooperative educational efforts among schools, businesses, and the community in Rochester (New York) is described. Statistics on the significant educational problems of Rochester schools are cited. The Program for Rochester to Interest Students in Science and Math (PRISM) and an initiative of Eastman Kodak scientists to enrich elementary school teaching of science, mathematics, and computer literacy are described. These programs are applauded, but found to reach only limited numbers of students. Components of the Rochester Initiative, which represents widespread community involvement in educational improvement efforts, include the following organizations and initiatives: (1) the Center for Educational Development (CED), a community task force working with the City school district; (2) the Community-Wide Initiative to Improve the Quality of the Rochester Public Schools, sponsored by the Urban League; (3) several joint and individual business initiatives; (4) Rochester Brainpower, a multi-pronged community-business partnership; and (5) close collaboration between school system administration and the teachers' union. (AF)

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The Rochester Initiative

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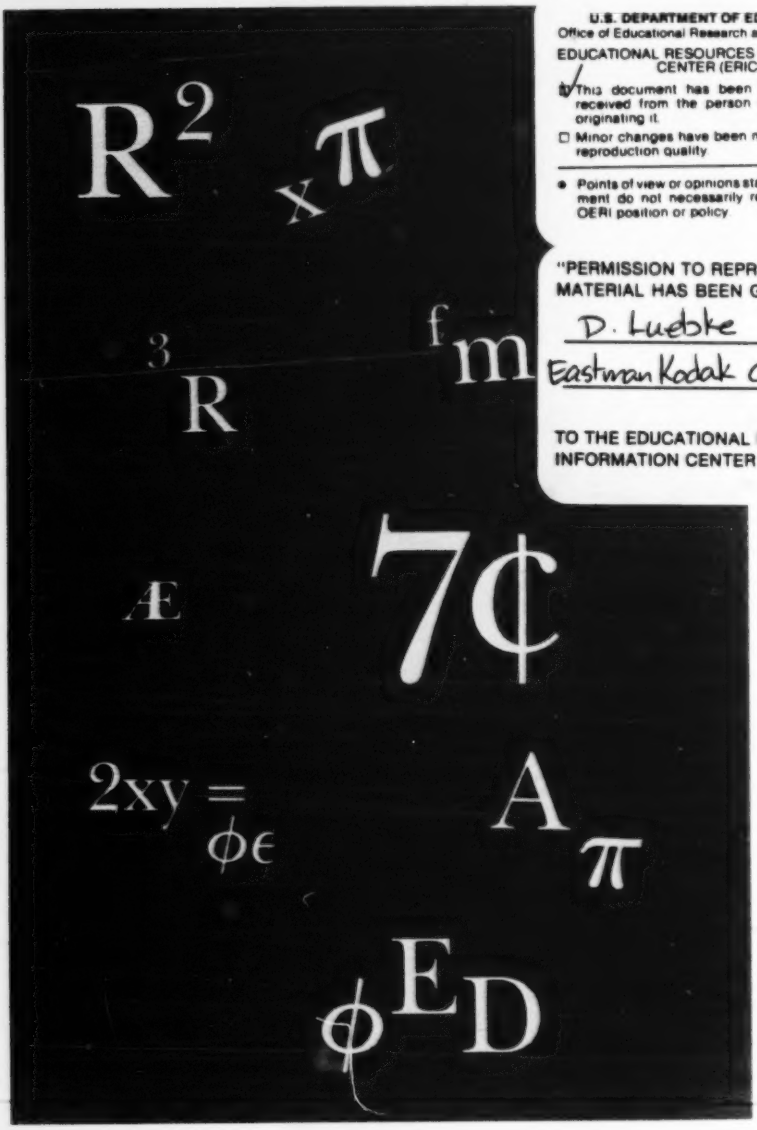

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Broad community support is key to the Rochester Initiative. Over the next few years, U.S. News & World Report *will track the progress of the community and one of the school system's students, Dante Hooker.*

Behind Dante, left to right, are Dennis O'Brien, president of the University of Rochester; Nettie Lloyd, Dante's mother; Barbara Neilander, his teacher; Adam Urbanksi, head of the teachers union; Peter McWalters, city schools superintendent; Kay Whitmore, president of Eastman Kodak; Anita Boggs, Dante's principal, and Bill Johnson, head of the Urban League.

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"What's going on in Rochester is among the most interesting and important events in American education today."

Thank you, Dick, and hello to all of you once again.

Before I get too deeply entrenched in my remarks, I'd like to say a few words about Dick Neblett and the NACME staff. To say that they have done an extraordinary job in planning FORUM '88 would be an understatement. But what I am most impressed with are their great strides to build bridges to other organizations. If NACME is to meet its goal of developing larger numbers of minority engineers to meet the technological and economic challenges of the next century, NACME cannot do it alone.

We need minority students to be prepared for college, if NACME is to help them through it. And we need to be more cognizant of the challenges and difficulties these kids face when in college and afterwards. In that light, "Diverse Populations—Common Goals" is an appropriate theme.

It signifies not only the diversity in our minority populations but in the organizations which seek to help them. Our experience is diverse; our goals common. The more we understand each other, the greater potential for mutual success.

In that spirit, this morning we will take a closer look at the changes taking place at an earlier place in the NACME pipeline... in my home, Rochester, New York.

Frankly, I must admit: I approach my remarks this morning with more than a little pride and more than a little trepidation. Those of us in Rochester have come a long way to get where we are today. But we have a long, long way to go.

There is excitement in the air in Rochester, and it's not just because we are finally witnessing spring. Many of you, I am sure, are aware of the headlines from the fall announcement of a landmark teacher contract in Rochester which raises teacher pay an average of 40 percent over three years and will allow some "lead teachers" to earn up to $70,000.

And some of you, no doubt, saw the January 18 feature in *U.S. News & World Report* touting initiatives taken by the Rochester community as "A Blueprint for Better Schools."

And some of you may have heard that the National Council on Education and the Economy, a think-tank successor to the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, has decided to move its headquarters from Washington, D.C. to Rochester saying, "What's going on in Rochester is among the most interesting and important events in American education today."

But these events mark neither a beginning nor an end. Nor did these events just spring up over night.

Many activities and initiatives preceded the current efforts... but, with only modest success. We have done a lot of nibbling at the edges. But the sad fact remains, that in our city school district of 33,000 students, less than two-thirds finish school and many of them are ill-prepared and ill-equipped to meet the challenges that await them.

We can't simply do the old things better or harder; we must do them differently.

Students coming through the Rochester city school system have a difficult road to travel:

- Four-fifths of those entering kindergarten are a year or more behind in readiness skills;
- Family incomes of 40 percent of Rochester's students will be below poverty at some time during their school years;
- Sixty percent will live in one-parent families;
- Twenty percent are absent once a week, 12 percent are absent every third day and 6 percent every other day;
- One of every five students is suspended each year;
- Up to one-half who try out for varsity sports are disqualified for failure to maintain C averages;
- And half of the 7th, 8th and 9th graders fail at least one core subject—English, math, social studies or science.

Against that background, imagine for a moment that we track 100 students from the beginning of their school days in Rochester through to their high school graduation. We would find on commencement day that:

- Thirty had vanished from school records, including 23 sure drop-outs;
- Fourteen, who made it to high school, left the district, perhaps to get a better education and graduate elsewhere;
- Nine remain in school, still trying to get their diplomas;
- Eighteen or 19 of the girls will have had at least one pregnancy; 11 or 12 already will have babies;
- And only 38 will be at commencement to receive diplomas. Of those, 9 will go on to four-year colleges. Nine others will enter a community college or seek further training. Twelve will have low-skill jobs. Four will enter the military and four will say their plans are uncertain.

This is hardly a measure of success. After all, 20 percent of Rochester's 19 year olds are not in school and are unemployed. Even many who go on to college and training programs face uncertain futures.

These facts paint a grim picture indeed. But I am convinced that the picture can be altered... with time... and a fundamentally different approach to education. We can't simply do the old things better or harder; we must do them differently. As the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching put it, we need "a new framework," not just a series of separate reforms.

That's not to knock the reforms and programs which have already been put in place. Indeed, several should be roundly applauded, for they show us the kinds of activities which need to be bolstered and expanded to meet the needs of all students.

One of the more exceptional programs in Rochester—which some of you heard about yesterday from its very talented director, Connie Mitchell—is PRISM, the Program for Rochester to Interest Students in Science and Math. Sponsored by the Industrial Management Council, which

... Rochester city schools are sending less than 10 percent of minority students to college.

represents Rochester manufacturers, it has been encouraging minority high school students for the last 10 years to stay in school, to focus on achievement and to consider future careers in science, mathematics and engineering.

The program includes:

- Regular visits to Rochester companies where students can see scientific and mathematical knowledge applied to making products;
- Special academic projects and honors for achievement.
- Teacher-coaches are paid a special stipend by the program;
- Minority engineers, scientists, computer specialists and technicians come into the classroom and serve as role models;
- And its summer program includes a one-week career orientation program at the Rochester Institute of Technology... and an 8-week internship with a Rochester company.

PRISM is a great success. An astonishing 64 percent of all minority high school graduates going on to college over the last nine years have come through this program. And many of us who have invested time and money in the program are seeing a payoff as well.

Lorne Jenkins, a bright, 25-year-old control engineer who helps design automation machinery at Kodak is a graduate of PRISM and holds a master's degree in engineering from Purdue. Connie Nathan, another PRISM graduate, is a mechanical engineer at Kodak. And today both, Mr. Jenkins and Ms. Nathan, work as volunteers and role models for the PRISM program.

My only dissatisfaction with this program is that it doesn't serve enough kids. Only a little more than 6 percent of the minority enrollment is reached... and Rochester city schools are sending less than 10 percent of its minority students to college.

While some programs have been designed in part to turn participating students into future employees, others have academic enrichment as their primary purpose.

In the spring of 1983, a number of Kodak scientists, active in the National Organization of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers, decided they wanted to foster student interest in science. They began with a 4th-grade class at the Clara Barton School, volunteering as teaching assistants and role models.

For the first two years, the scientists dipped into their own pockets to pay for $20,000 in equipment. They recruited more volunteers and, last year, received a grant to buy computers and develop a fourth-grade computer literacy program. Today, 18 volunteers from Kodak and Xerox spend up to 4 hours each week working with five classes in the third, fourth and fifth grades to enrich the teaching of science, math and computer literacy. Next year they plan to expand their efforts to the sixth grade.

We don't do enough of that in Rochester. And frankly, we don't do enough of that at Kodak. Again, this is a program that has reached only a couple of hundred kids... in three grades... in one school... in a school system of 33,000.

Civic involvement must grow exponentially to promote the kind of changes that are truly necessary.

Due to a city financial crisis and a lack of adequate attention, very little was done for education in Rochester beyond a few programs like these prior to 1984. On the national level there have been some programs available like Junior Achievement, which teaches students business skills by having them set up their own companies. And the Urban League has had its Black Scholar program.

Yes, these are spectacular programs. But they're not enough. We simply can't reach enough kids with them to make more than a dent in the entire system. Civic involvement must grow exponentially to promote the kind of changes that are truly necessary.

So, why aren't such programs expanded? Why haven't school districts across the country spent the money to carry out many of these programs themselves? The answer is easy: lack of financing and lack of focus.

We have clearly put enormous strain on our schools by asking them to solve every social problem there is. Every problem the community can't handle, we say, "This must be the school's problem." So we've said, "Fix that problem, fix this problem and incidentally, why don't you educate those kids while you're tackling that drug problem and the teenage pregnancy problem?"

In the late 1970s and early 1980s the City of Rochester, like many cities, faced a major financial crisis. The rush to the suburbs during the previous 20 years had robbed the city of much of its tax base. With the city taxing its residents to the legal limit, the school district was forced to cut programs. So, at a time when we were asking our schools to do more, we continued to provide less. And while the city went into debt... to cover some of the tab, the school program still suffered.

In 1984, Monroe County agreed to reassign a portion of the county's sales taxes to fund city programs, notably city schools.

This helped alleviate one major problem, but we still lacked a focus. Then two events took place which motivated the community to explore ways to help our schools.

The first was the formation of the Center for Educational Development in 1984. Created by a community task force working with the city school district, it was the first district-wide effort to channel the energy of the community into the schools.

CED, among many other activities:

- Gives small grants to dozens of teachers for field trips and special materials;
- Provides modest sums to support tutoring and parenting programs;
- Acts as a clearinghouse for donated supplies and scrap materials;
- Brings individual volunteers and students together;
- Brings businesses and civic organizations in partnership with individual schools;
- And, in general, acts as the focal point for community involvement in the schools.

The other key event in the beginning stages of what we now know as the Rochester Initiative

...the president of the local Urban League, after learning that barely 3 percent of the blacks who graduated from city schools had a B average, challenged the community to act.

was even more profound in its ability to bring the community together. Bill Johnson, the president of the local Urban League, after learning that barely 3 percent of the blacks who graduated from city schools had a B average, challenged the community to act.

He and the League embarked on a Community-Wide Initiative to Improve the Quality of the Rochester Public Schools. His program included:

- A series of breakfast meetings with key community groups, educators, clergy and business which centered on how to solve the problem, not who to blame;
- A series of "Speakouts" for students, parents and educators on the question: "What can be done to improve the academic performance of Rochester's students?";
- A conference was held at the University of Rochester to discuss the challenges faced by the city schools;
- And a town meeting was held.
- These activities ultimately led to a 1986 report entitled "A Call to Action," which expressed the school system's basic needs:
  - —The need to involve parents more fully in their children's education, and to improve communications between home and the school.
  - —The need to involve pupils more fully in their own education.
  - —The need to involve every segment of the community.
  - —The need to emphasize academic rigor.
  - —And the need for pre-kindergarten education.

The report's findings served as a catalyst for change. A business-industry task force was appointed. And a team of five executives were designated to spend one school year studying Rochester's school district, as well as others around the country, to find ways for business to help.

Involving the business community was nothing new. There are many community-wide and state-wide efforts throughout the country, in large part sponsored by business, to improve education and job opportunities.

Many are based on the Boston Compact model... whereby a stronger relationship is created among public schools, post-secondary institutions and businesses... to foster student achievement, college placement and career readiness.

And many businesses have their own initiatives:

- Prudential finances summer jobs for high schoolers who go to work in small businesses.
- American Express has had "financial academies" for inner-city youth that prepared students for careers in financial services.
- Coca-Cola spends $500,000 a year to attack the dropout rate at nine high schools in four cities with large minority populations.
- Frito-Lay and Chevron, here in Texas, participate in "adopt-a-school" and special tutoring programs.

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But what made Rochester's effort unique was its broad scope and its many participants. A real commitment has been made by nearly everyone in the community. Stimulated by the Urban League, the Center for Educational Development, the Industrial Management Council and the Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce, Rochester Brainpower was formed. Today its programs include:

- A job placement program which links performance on the job with performance in school and provides exposure to the working environment and career paths. This program includes a company-paid job counselor in every high school.
- There is a partnership program that has teamed 30 individual businesses and organizations with individual schools, which is managed by the Center for Educational Development.

One effort—sponsored by Wegmans Supermarkets for students aged 14 and 15—provides jobs to those who need special motivation to complete school. And each participant who graduates and enrolls in college receives a full-tuition scholarship from Wegmans... up to $5,000 a year.

This fall, Kodak will begin its own Scholars Program. Ten minority college freshmen each year will receive full tuition until they receive their bachelor's degree. Kodak guarantees every scholar in the program a summer job after successful completion of their second academic year. A Kodak mentor will also be selected to provide one-on-one counseling and assistance to every scholar.

- Another element of Rochester Brainpower is a staff development program at the University of Rochester which helps city teachers develop classroom techniques and helps the city identify teachers with the abilities to become school principals.
- A consulting resources program provides management help to the school district on an as needed basis.
- And the most highly visible aspect of Rochester Brainpower is a marketing campaign under the direction of the Rochester Advertising Council —chaired by a Kodak executive. Featuring outdoor advertising, radio spots and television commercials, this 15-month-old effort has made more than 76 million gross audience impressions... and is valued at more than $1.1 million with the bulk of services donated by the agencies and companies involved.

Brainpower promotions include a "Back to School Night" sponsored by the local minor league baseball club and free McDonald's quarter-pounders to students with an "A" or a "B" on their report cards.

Other marketing activities include slide shows, videotape presentations, literature, and the establishment of a hotline to provide answers to parents, students and others interested in Brainpower.

Students now know that people do care about their schools. Teachers now know that the community cares about their efforts...

Prior to developing this media effort, market research was conducted by local agencies. Two themes emerged from this research:

—For parents, the message was: "Help a teacher help your child."

—And for students, the message was: "Stay in school. You're too good to lose."

The television commercials and public service announcements developed around these target messages have made an impact. Indeed, one student on a local television interview show claimed that one prompted her to stay in school.

What this advertising effort has created is an umbrella for all Rochester efforts. Students now know that people do care about their schools. Teachers now know that the community cares about their efforts... and feel they have finally gained the respect they deserve. The community as a whole is working together.

It is this very atmosphere which brought Adam Urbanski, president of the Rochester Teachers Association, and Peter McWalters, the superintendent of city schools, together.

As Urbanski put it, "We had a Superintendent who was pushing for teacher empowerment and a union president behind teacher accountability."

Indeed, these factors are the heart and soul of the agreement... not the dollars that captured the headlines. Teachers received not only more money, but a greater voice in the structure of their schools... and about what they teach and how they teach it.

The school district achieved greater accountability. Teachers can be assigned where they're needed and dismissed if "peer mentoring" does not improve classroom performance. The contract also requires longer hours and more work days. And makes universal an existing program called "home-based guidance," in which every teacher and administrator takes personal responsibility for 20 students over several years. They'll visit their homes, know their parents, ask the students how they are doing both in school and out. In general, they'll invest something of themselves in each of these kids.

As McWalters explains, "I never want to hear of a kid who is doing well and then gradually starts falling through the cracks and nobody knows it."

While we have yet to see how all of this will ultimately affect our primary customers—the kids themselves, the contract does seem to be making a difference. Teacher applications are up substantially. And some teachers who left the district are coming back for more money and the chance to be part of an experiment.

What our experiment in Rochester shows is that partnership between the schools and the community is critical to achieving broad reform. It requires the involvement of parents, the involvement of the business community, greater teacher responsibility and accountability, greater student involvement and a tangible payoff for staying in school.

partnership... requires the involvement of parents, the involvement of the business community, greater teacher responsibility and accountability...

It is here that organizations like NACME play a critical role. What is the value of being prepared for college, if you can't afford to get there? For many families in our city schools, the cost of four years of college are overwhelming. A visit home for Christmas from an out-of-town college can be more than what most families can afford. But by being there as a potential source of funds, you provide many of the best and brightest minority students with interests in engineering with the hope and desire to go on.

And as we will hear tomorrow from Jaime Escalante, the extraordinary math teacher whose achievements are celebrated in the hit movie "Stand and Deliver," the desire in these kids is all important. The Spanish word for "desire" is "gana." Its verb form "ganar," quite appropriately translates: "to earn" and "to win."

In Rochester we can all be winners, if we do not grow impatient before we begin to turn things around. Everyone should know that it takes time to turn an ocean-liner at sea... and that such a course correction does not come easy. As the President of an American manufacturing firm that has had to adapt to the quickly changing seas of a global marketplace, I know fundamental change is not easy... but I also know that it is worth the effort.

And I truly believe that what we are doing in Rochester and what Mr. Escalante is doing in East Los Angeles, can be done elsewhere... it only takes the "gana," the desire, the will.

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